

Building Criminal Justice into Mental Health System Transformation

GAINS Center Offers State-Level Technical Assistance

In October 2005 the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) awarded a total of more than \$18 million to six states through the Mental Health Transformation State Incentive Grant (SIG) Program. As described by SAMHSA, these grants are intended to allow states to conduct *an array of infrastructure and service delivery improvement activities to help build a solid foundation for delivering and sustaining effective mental health and related services. These grants...will support new and expanded planning and development to promote transformation to systems explicitly designed to foster recovery and meet the multiple needs of consumers.*¹

The SIG Program was initiated as CMHS's response to the call of the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health to transform the Nation's mental health system into one where *everyone with a mental illness will recover, mental illnesses can be prevented or cured, mental illnesses are detected early, everyone with a mental illness at any stage of life has access to effective treatment and supports.*² Included in the New Freedom Commission's recommendations is a call for states to widely adopt innovative strategies to "avoid the unnecessary criminalization and extended incarceration of nonviolent adult and juvenile offenders with mental illnesses."³

The National GAINS Center is committed to the goal of transforming the nation's fragmented mental health system and developing a recovery-oriented, consumer-driven system of care as described in the New Freedom Commission report. GAINS has developed a comprehensive plan of knowledge application and technical assistance to further the implementation of evidence-based practices and aid states in forging transformation through the integration of their mental health, substance abuse, and criminal justice system.

Since 1995, the GAINS Center has developed a national reputation as the primary source for training & targeted technical assistance related to the involvement of individuals with mental illness in the criminal justice system. This assistance is now being offered at the state level in the form of extended consultation and facilitated action planning sessions for key stakeholders

¹ Mental Health Transformation State Incentive Grant description; retrieved from http://www.samhsa.gov/grants/2005/nofa/sm05009_mht_sig.aspx on February 17, 2006.

² New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, *Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America. Final Report*. DHHS Pub. No. SMA-03-3832. Rockville, MD: 2003. Page 1.

³ Ibid. pages 43-44.

involved in the development of comprehensive plans for state mental health system reforms to ensure that consideration is given to justice-involved individuals. The first such event will take place on April 26, 2006 in Albuquerque, NM. With assistance from GAINS staff and expert consultants, representatives from the state's mental health and criminal justice systems will collaborate to:

- develop a profile of the state's mental health/criminal justice services and needs within the national context;
- develop an estimate of service needs based on local, state and national prevalence data;
- review key national initiatives for addressing the intersection of mental health and criminal justice; and,
- develop priorities for action and identify next steps.

This assistance is available to SIG grantees and other states committed to improving their systems' response to individuals with mental illness and criminal justice involvement. Please contact the National GAINS Center at (800) 311-GAIN or gains@prainc.com if you are interested in bringing this assistance to your state.